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Africa Partnership Station Arrives in Dakar, Senegal

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class (AW/SW) RJ Stratchko, Africa Partnership Station Public Affairs



Jay T. Smith, Charge d' Affaires, a.i. U.S. Embassy Dakar, POQM1 James Ma, Nigerian Navy, and Capt. John B. Nowell, Commodore, Destroyer Squadron Six Zero, cut a cake at the Africa Partnership Station (APS) reception for U.S. Embassy and Senegalese government officials in Dakar, Senegal, Nov. 6.

DAKAR, Senegal – The Africa Partnership Station (APS) arrived at Dakar, Senegal, the first port of its seven-month deployment, aboard the Amphibious Dock Landing Ship USS Fort McHenry (LSD 43). APS is an international effort aiming to enhance regional and maritime safety and security in West and Central Africa. APS includes African, European and American Sailors all on the same staff, working towards a common goal, partnership in maritime safety and security, and is bringing an international team of expert trainers in a variety of military capacities, and a handful of civilian fields such as fisheries management.

While the Navy has conducted training during routine deployments in West Africa for years, the size and focus of the APS mission is new and different.

“This [APS] is much more than you have ever brought here before,” said Jean Baptiste Faye, Chief of Operations for the Senegalese Navy, during meetings with Capt. John Nowell, Commodore for APS. “Before, it was always a few members of one visiting ship, offering a little training. This time, you’re coming with ship riders, with more training, and it is much more elaborate.”

With APS, training is conducted as requested by the partner countries. In Senegal, that means traditional military training, such as engineering and small boat handling, plus a handful of specialty areas.

“APS is deployed in Dakar to carry out military training, and civilian events in the field of the environment, [including] National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). We also have organized a meeting with Africa Center of Strategy Securities (ACSS). This is not only military, but this mission has a larger view about the continent,” said Lt. Cmdr. Bertrand Daniel, a French Navy officer and member of the APS planning team.

In addition to his planning duties, Daniel has also served as a translator between English and French-speaking partners.

“As a French speaking officer aboard, I helped the relations between the harbor pilot and the captain. I also know the area because I was the commanding officer of the Hydrographic Survey Ship Laplace (A 791), when we had a port visit to Dakar, Senegal,” said Daniel.

But APS is more than training. APS will conduct large Community Relation (COMREL) projects in each of the countries visited.

“We have a couple of community relation projects set up, one with an elementary school in town where we are taking 25 Sailors to finish painting the interior. Second is an orphanage that needs some concrete construction about two hours away, where a crew of 20 Sailors, Seabees and Beach Master personnel will be working,” said Lt. Paul Wigginton, Chaplain for Fort McHenry and the APS COMREL coordinator.

Africa Partnership Station 2007 is a U.S. Naval Forces Europe-led initiative, executed by a multi-national staff aboard Fort McHenry and High Speed Vessel Swift (HSV 2). Commander Task Group 60.4 and training teams from various U.S. and European military commands, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations are embarked on board Fort McHenry to enhance cooperative partnerships with regional maritime services in West and Central Africa and the Gulf of Guinea on a seven-month deployment.